

*“We have to know what we have, how and why it is changing, what changes we can accommodate, and which we must combat.”*

Fran Mainella, Science and Learning Center Dedication, Crater Lake, 22 August 2002

## Assessing and Managing Threats

NPS PHOTO



Etched into a saguaro cactus, the Mexican state name “Sinaloa” betrays the path of illegal aliens and drug smugglers entering the United States at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Stepped-up efforts to shut down these activities at populated areas along the U.S.-Mexico border have led to an alarming increase in crossing attempts in remote areas like Organ Pipe.

*A large part of the stewardship of the national parks is the assessment and management of influences and activities that are or could be damaging to park resources. This essential duty entails anticipating and detecting resource degradation and taking action to maintain resource quality. It involves attentiveness, rational planning, and diligent, hands-on intervention based in science. And it requires weighing a wide range of needs and potential responses. This year’s articles highlight the astonishing variety of challenges and the search for fair and effective management solutions. They tell of monitoring resource impacts from illegal border crossings, containing an oil well blowout, the worrying spread of infectious wildlife diseases, negotiating water resource protection in the desert Southwest, restoring an island ecosystem infested with nonnative rats, determining legal limits for noise pollution, and other issues. In each case the National Park Service is striving to provide opportunities for people to continue to enjoy unimpaired park resources.*

Intro